

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended) A device for securely storing a value indicative of funds available for use, comprising:

- a first storage for storing said value;
- an internally stored identifier within said device for providing a unique identification of said device;
- a second storage in said device for storing information assigning said device to operate in an initial individual operation application environment; and
- a first communications interface for changing said information so as to assign said device to a new remotely located external application environment for servicing the device, the new application environment for servicing the device being different from the initial operational environment; and
a second communications interface to provide the internally stored identifier to an external system.

~~wherein the internally stored identifier is readable by an external system.~~

2. (previously presented) The device of claim 1, wherein said identifier is digital data.
3. (previously presented) The device of claim 1 wherein said identifier is a character string.
4. (previously presented) The device of claim 2, further comprising circuitry, wherein said digital data is stored on said circuitry.
5. (previously presented) The device of claim 1, in combination with an adapter for connecting to said device, said adapter further comprising:
 - an electrical connector for electrically connecting to said device; and

an interface for supporting communication between said device and an external system,
so that said device can be identified by said external system reading by reading
said identifier.

6. (previously presented) The device of claim 5, wherein said interface supports communication with at least one protocol selected from the group consisting of RS-232; IEEE 488; USB; TCP/IP; SCSI; Infrared, RF; net appliance protocol; and personal computer bus protocols.

7. (previously presented) The device of claim 1, configured as a virtual device on a computer.

8. (previously presented) The device of claim 1, configured so as to be useful as a postal funds security device.

9. (currently amended) The device of claim 8, configured to be used in a closed postal system application environment, the closed postal system application environment having a ~~wherein the~~ printing function that is integral to the closed postal system application environment.

10. (currently amended) The device of claim 8, configured to be used in an open postal application environment, the open postal application environment having a ~~wherein the~~ printing function that is external to the open postal system application environment.

11. (previously presented) The device of claim 1, embodied in the form of an apparatus, further comprising a human readable identifier corresponding to said internally stored identifier, said human readable identifier being displayed externally on said apparatus.

12. (previously presented) The device of claim 1, embodied in the form of an apparatus, further comprising externally visible indicia on said apparatus, said indicia corresponding to said internally stored identifier.

13. (previously presented) The device of claim 12, wherein said externally visible indicia comprises at least one of a bar code and a serial number.

14. (currently amended) A method for allocating use of a device for securely storing a value indicative of funds available for use; said device having an internally stored identifier for providing a unique identification of said device, said method comprising:

- a) relating said ~~externally readable~~ identifier to an initial application environment;
- b) configuring the device to operate in said initial application environment; and
- c) reallocating said device by repeating steps a) and b) for introduction to new application environments, the new application environments being different than the initial application environment;

~~wherein the internally stored identifier is readable by an external system.~~

15. (currently amended) A method for allocating use of a device for securely storing a value indicative of funds available for use; said device having a storage for storing said value[[:]] and an internally stored identifier for providing a unique identification of said device, said method comprising:

- a) relating said ~~externally readable~~ identifier to an initial application environment; and
- b) configuring the device to operate in said initial application environment;

~~wherein the internally stored identifier is readable by an external system.~~

16. (previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein said identifier is digital data.

17. (previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein said identifier is a character string.

18. (previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein said identifier is digital data stored in circuitry in said device.

19. (previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein said device is embodied in an apparatus, further comprising establishing communication between said apparatus and a system external to said apparatus.

20. (previously presented) The method of claim 19, further comprising identifying said apparatus by reading said identifier.
21. (previously presented) The method of claim 20, further comprising:
connecting said apparatus to an adapter, said adapter comprising an electrical connector for electrically connecting to said apparatus, and an interface for supporting communication between said apparatus and an external system; and
identifying said apparatus with said external system by said external system reading said identifier.
22. (previously presented) The method of claim 21, wherein communication is established with at least one protocol selected from the group consisting of RS-232; IEEE 488; USB; TCP/IP; SCSI; infrared; optical; RF; net appliance protocol; and personal computer bus protocols.
23. (previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein said device is configured as a virtual device on a computer.
24. (previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein said device is configured so as to be useful as a postal funds security device.
25. (previously presented) The method of claim 24, wherein said device is configured to be used in a closed postal system application environment.
26. (previously presented) The method of claim 24, wherein said device is configured to be used in an open postal system application environment.
27. (previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein said device is embodied in the form of an apparatus, the method further comprising providing visible access externally on said apparatus to a human readable identifier corresponding to said internally stored identifier.

28. (previously presented) The method of claim 15, wherein said device is embodied in the form of an apparatus, further comprising placing externally visible indicia on said apparatus, said indicia corresponding to said internally stored identifier.

29. (previously presented) The method of claim 28, wherein said externally visible indicia comprises at least one of a bar code and a serial number.

30. (previously presented) The method of claim 15, further comprising reallocating said device by repeating steps a) and b) for a new application environment, the new application environment being different than the initial application environment.

31. (previously presented) The method of claim 30, further comprising placing said device in the new application environment before accomplishing said reallocation.

32. (original) The method of claim 31, further comprising authorizing said reallocation using a secure authorization step.

33. (original) The method of claim 32, wherein said step comprises at least one of using encryption and using a password to authenticate said authorization step.

34. (new) The method of claim 14, further comprising transmitting the internally stored identifier to an external system.

35. (new) The method of claim 15, further comprising transmitting the internally stored identifier to an external system.

36. (new) A device comprising:
a first storage to store an indication of funds available for use;
a second storage to store an identifier associated with the device;
a third storage to store assignment information describing the application environment to which the device is assigned; and

a communication interface to provide the identifier to an external system;
wherein the assignment information comprises information describing at least one of a customer, a function-set, or an operating environment.

37. (new) The device of claim 36, further comprising a human readable representation of the identifier, the human readable representation disposed on an outer surface of the device.

38. (new) A method for allocating use of an available funds storage device comprising:
storing an identifier of the device in a storage of the device;
providing the identifier to an external system;
associating the identifier with a first application environment;
storing an indication of the first application environment in the device; and
when the device is to be used in a new application environment:
providing the identifier to an external system;
disassociating the identifier with the first application environment;
associating the identifier with a second application environment, the second application environment being different from the first application environment; and
storing an indication of the second application environment in the device.

39. (new) The method of claim 38, wherein the first application environment, the second application environment, or both comprise a postal system application environment.

40. (new) The method of claim 39, further comprising placing the device in the second application environment prior to disassociating the identifier with the first application environment and associating the identifier with the second application environment.

41. (new) The method of claim 38, wherein the second application environment is a personal computer.

42. (new) The device of claim 5, wherein said interface supports communication with a personal computer.